

News Release

National Wildlife Refuge System



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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November 8, 2010

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Releases Environmental Assessment for Dune Restoration at Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today released an environmental assessment (EA) for dune restoration at Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge and issued a Finding of No Significant Impact. The plan is a short-term, interim action that seeks to maintain the freshwater marsh south of Fowler Beach in as stable a condition as possible while technical information is gathered and long-term management plans are developed.

The Service proposes to scrape sand from the overwash areas in Unit II on the refuge to build up approximately 3,000 feet of dunes south of Fowler Beach and fill in recently created inlets. Under this plan, the State of Delaware has agreed to undertake this project and will be granted access across the refuge as needed to conduct the specified work.

The final EA considered input received from federal, State, and local partners, as well as members of the public. The draft EA was released on July 27, with a 30-day comment period.

The Service is also soliciting public comment on a compatibility determination (CD) allowing the State of Delaware access to refuge property for the purpose of short-term dune repair as outlined in the EA. Service policy requires a CD on these types of actions, to assess whether the action is compatible with refuge purposes and the mission of the Service. Comments must be received by Nov. 22, 2010, and may be submitted in writing to the refuge, faxed to 302-684-8504, or sent via electronic mail to fw5rw_phnwr@fws.gov.

Both documents are available online at www.fws.gov/northeast/primehook or at the refuge office at 11978 Turkle Pond Rd., Milton, Delaware.

In the fall and winter of 2009, several Nor'easter storms created storm surge conditions that overwashed the dunes along the refuge's Unit II south of Fowler Beach. A mini-inlet formed that severely eroded the dune line, breaching the freshwater marsh with saltwater from the Delaware Bay. While the EA addresses the short-term plan for the Unit II dune line, the refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan is currently under development and will address long-term management plans at the refuge.

The EA is required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Its purpose is to determine if the Proposed Action will have significant impacts on the environment, to address unresolved environmental issues, to provide a basis for a decision on the proposal, and to facilitate interagency coordination between the Service and the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) to manage and protect natural and cultural resources. The EA explores methods for the Service to carry out policies consistent with refuge management objectives, and analyzes the foreseeable impacts that can reasonably be attributed to the alternative methods.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov.